

# OFFICIAL DISPATCH

VIA \_\_\_\_\_  
(Specify Air or Sea Pouch)

~~KAPOK~~ JUN 1959

DISPATCH NO. \_\_\_\_\_

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SECURITY INFORMATION  
CLASSIFICATION

~~KAPOK~~ 249

TO : Senior Representative, ☒  
ATTN: ☒  
FROM : Chief, SE ☒

DATE 21 OCT 1953

SUBJECT { GENERAL - SHAM/BGFIEND  
SPECIFIC - Security Review of APPLE Team Operations

1. Forwarded under separate cover in split-pouch memorandum form is Headquarters' security review of APPLE team operations, in accordance with Field Regulation 50-20.

2. It will be appreciated if you will forward your review in compliance with the above field regulation as soon as possible so that Headquarters can complete its analysis of the security of this operation.

Chief, SE

25 September 1953

: 2.1/w/attachments (2) (Forwarded u.s.c. as A and B.)

44 SE-1/E

3/8/2

## Distribution:

STC : 1  
Vital Documents : 1  
SE-1 : 1  
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DATE 2007

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FORM NO. 51-29  
JUN 1949

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Security Review of APPLE Team Operations

BACKGROUND

1. On 15 August 1951, [ ] then Chief of RNCautious/Experience, at the direction of KUBark director, called upon RNCasting, who was visiting the United States to discuss various Albanian questions. RNCasting stated he stood ready to do what he could, should ODYOKE wish to call on him in connection with any Albanian activities. At a further meeting with RNCasting on 30 August 1951, Rivett accepted RNCasting's offer and outlined a plan whereby ODYOKE would provide the material and technical support and RNCasting would supply high grade agents for infiltration missions. Both parties were to benefit from the accomplishment of the intelligence networks thus set up. RNCasting agreed to these arrangements, and on 1 May 1952 the first RNCasting team, known as APPLE, was infiltrated into Albania.

2. The mission of APPLE team was: (a) to conduct reconnaissance and determine conditions within Albania; (b) to attempt to locate and establish contacts with friends in government and military circles and elsewhere; (c) and to send out intelligence by W/T or runners who could act as guides for future infiltration operations.

APPLE team was to infiltrate overland from Greece and was to travel at night. No attempt would be made to contact anyone whatsoever until the operational area, Mati-Mirdite-Diber, had been reached. The intention of APPLE team was to remain within the area of operations as long as conditions permitted.

3. The first APPLE team, composed of five members and two guides, infiltrated into Albania overland from Northern Greece on 1 May 1952. The two guides were to conduct the team across the border and return. Upon reaching the operational area, the team leader decided that, because of the poor food conditions in the area, three APPLE members should return to Greece. The three exfiltrates arrived safely in Greece on 15 June 1952.

On 4 August 1952, an agent, who had originally been scheduled to go with APPLE team, but who had been forced to stay behind at the last moment due to a heart attack, was parachuted to the two-man APPLE team.

On 3 November 1952 a message was received from APPLE stating that the W/T operator had broken his operating hand. Once it was established the team was not controlled, a new W/T operator was dispatched on 29 January 1953.

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Because of an urgent need for intelligence and operational information, it was decided to bring the leader out in the spring of 1953. A three-man team was parachuted to APPLE on 1 May 1953 to guide the leader and wounded W/T operator to Greece. On 5 June 1953, the exfiltration team, now known as APPLE/3, reported being ambushed close to the Greek border; one member was wounded. The last W/T contact with this group came on 18 June 1953, when its position was reported to be close to the Greek border.

In the meantime, the stay-behind two-member APPLE team, now known as APPLE/2, was in W/T contact with base from its operational area. On 4 June 1953, this team was to act as a reception committee for two teams to be parachuted in the country. However, APPLE/2 reported that it had not received the men. The fate of the latter is unknown to date; whereas, the two-man APPLE/2 team is still operating in Albania.

PERSONNEL

4. The following is a list of the personnel involved in this operation and the roles they played:

Staff - The file does not specifically show the participation of individual staff members in the operation. For example, a typical dispatch states that the team was trained by "BGFiend Staff", without further identification. However, at various times, the following staff personnel were identified in the operation,

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**Agents -**

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GABNEGATE ✓

- Agent, guide. Operational clearance granted  
13 April 1953.

GABOARD ✓

- Agent, guide. Operational clearance granted  
28 April 1953.

OPERATION

5. The first APPLE team composition was as follows: 1) Airtight, 2) RNPutlog, 3) RNDomino, 4) Airwise, 5) RNCertain, 6) Airometer. The guide who was to take the team across the border was Airmail. The team, however, picked up Airspray as the second guide at the last moment, having been recruited for the mission by Airmail because the latter did not want to return to Greece alone after completing his guiding functions. (Note: Airspray was once rejected by BGFiend because of a spot on his lung.) No further information is available at Headquarters regarding this action.

RNCertain, Airtight, and Airometer were recruited by RNCasting for dispatch on the first APPLE mission, together with three others described below. The three above-named agents were selected and recruited by RNCasting in Alexandria, Egypt. RNCatnap, an aid of RNCasting, was assigned by RNCasting to accompany the three agents to their final destination, Athens, where he would assist in preparing the team as long as he was useful; he would then return clandestinely to Egypt. Thus, the three agents, escorted by RNCatnap, departed by ship for Marseilles, France overtly. The four men held royal Albanian passports. They then proceeded to Paris where they were contacted by [ ] , BGFiend representative in Germany; the latter moved them to Germany covertly. The four men were held at a safehouse in Bad Tols until they were ready for the covert flight from Furstenfeldbruck to Athens on 26 March 1953. Security was maintained by frequent use of vehicle cut-outs and strict contact schedule at all rendezvous points. There is no adverse information regarding the security of the above operation.

RNPutlog had been dispatched on previous missions by the field, and was generally considered to be the highest level Albanian agent available.

RNDomino was selected from HBPardon <sup>Release</sup> and had not been used on previous missions. He was trained at Wagness Estate, Germany, as a W/T operator. Allegations that he was engaged in espionage on behalf of the Albanian Communist Government will be discussed later in this report.

Airwise was recruited in Greece and had been used by ASFire on THUNDERBOLT Group 322. There is no adverse information on subject.

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Airmail had been used previously by the Greeks in border crossings. On the APPLE mission he was used merely as a guide to conduct the team across the border and then return. No information is available at Headquarters as to the safe return of Airmail upon completion of his mission.

6. APPLE team received one month's training and conditioning in Greece. Training consisted of survival problems, night compass problems, firing of weapons, map reading and familiarization with the HTRegale coordinate system, First Aid and field hygiene, use of concentrated rations, setting up and operating radio set in the field and maintaining contact with base in conjunction with simulated intelligence and observation reporting problems. The team was also given a general review of the type of intelligence required by BGFiend.

Training was given by the BGFiend staff members. It should be noted that RNDomino received W/T training at Wagness Estate, Germany.

In the briefing, special attention was given to border crossing with emphasis on disposition of security forces, mined areas and permanent fortifications. Instruction was given in secret ink, and a Greek cut-out address was to be used in the event no radio contact was made by 20 May 1952. A prearranged schedule for drops and DZ's was layed on. The team members were briefed with all available information concerning their area of operation. Safe-houses and friendly contacts were made known to them. They were informed of the proposed operation of two teams in Diber and Luma areas with the coming of springtime. The team code name, APPLE, was given them for use as a password only in the event of recrossing into Greece. Any runners being sent out by the team were to use the phrase, APPLE SPECIAL for identification. Albanian identity cards were issued using aliases with no entry made for military service or family status.

7. APPLE team was flown to the Northern Greek frontier on 28 April 1952, for infiltration into Albania on 1 May 1952. The latter date is the world-wide BGCypsy May Day and APPLE took advantage of this period of possible relaxation of security patrols. The team was delivered to the Greek service at the forward staging area. On the night of 1 May, the team began its trek toward Albania. After 3 1/2 hours' walk and just before crossing the frontier, RNCertain began suffering from pains in his chest. The team decided to leave the ailing member behind, for fear that he would probably retard its progress. RNCertain was returned to Athens. The remainder of the team continued toward the border. RNCertain was found to have a serious coronary condition which could prove fatal with over-exertion. However, he was anxious to rejoin the team and asked to be parachuted in with the first supply drop. It must be noted that RNCertain's loss to APPLE was substantial, for he is said to have been well known in the Mati area and was to have made all the contacts there.

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The team infiltrated between the towns of Bozhigrad and Erseke and moved under the cover of night. The team proceeded toward the operational area, travelling only at night. During the day the team remained in hiding in secluded areas or with friends.

On 8 May 1952, a resupply drop of one container was delivered to APPLE team. RNCertain, who was badly needed by the team to make the contacts in the operational area, was to be dispatched on the 20 May resupply mission. However, because no W/T contact had been made with APPLE since 8 May and because the airplane crew debriefing indicated that powerful flashlights had been seen on the reception field on 8 May - flashlights which APPLE had not been equipped with - it was feared that the team might be controlled and therefore it was decided not to risk RNCertain on the 20 May resupply drop. Instead, the next resupply flight would carry a complete new radio, in the event APPLE's radio had been damaged, and a written message to the team designed to lure the Albanian Communists into putting the APPLE W/T operator on the air if he was controlled, thus giving him the opportunity to transmit the control signal. In the event APPLE did receive the resupply and subsequently did come on the air without the control signal, RNCertain would be dropped in the following resupply mission.

However, W/T contact and the resupply drop attempt on 20 May 1952 were unsuccessful due to the weather. On 27 May 1952, W/T contact was finally established with APPLE team. The latter informed base that all team members were well and they had arrived safely at their operational area; the team furthermore acknowledged the receipt of the 8 May supply drop.

8. Having reached the operational area, the team leader, Airtight, ordered three members of his team, RNPutlog, Airwise, and Airometer to exfiltrate into Greece. The latter three separated on 28 May 1952 and successfully exfiltrated without mishap into Greece on 15 June 1952.

In the debriefing, the three exfiltrates stated that Airtight had given this order because: (1) it would have been impossible to maintain a large group in the face of the existing difficult food situation; (2) the mountain area, familiar to the team members, could no longer be used because flocks were being moved into the area; (3) RNPutlog and Airwise had accomplished their portion of the mission, and Airometer should accompany them. It appears from this that RNPutlog and Airwise had accomplished their portion of the mission insofar as they, being acquainted with the area, had acted as guides. As for Airometer, the field suggested that he was ordered to exfiltrate in order to report to RNCasting. It was further stated in the debriefing that Airtight and RNDomino were fairly secure in the operational area. Contacts had been made with twelve Albanians and O.B. information was brought out by the three exfiltrates.

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The three exfiltrates travelled by day on their southward journey to Greece, since they had made safe contacts on their trip into the operational area.

On 17 June 1952, the three APPLE exfiltrates were moved to a safehouse in the Athens area and held there until debriefing was completed on 25 June 1952. At that time, RNPullog and Airometer were moved to Loutraki, and Airwise was permitted to return to his family in the vicinity of Athens.

9. After the exfiltration of RNPullog, Airwise, and Airometer on 15 June 1952, APPLE team inside Albania consisted of Airtight, team leader, and RNDomino, W/T operator. On 24 July 1952, APPLE team urgently requested the dispatch of RNCertain to develop Mati area contacts. RNCertain was found physically fit for the drop and on 4 August 1952 he was parachuted to the APPLE team. Contact by W/T on 6 August confirmed RNCertain's safe arrival. Along with the delivery of RNCertain, there was also a supply drop of some 14,000 pounds, including an RS-1 radio set. However, the transmitting unit of the RS-1 was not included. It appears that, in lieu of the transmitter, a power supply unit was included in the RS-1 delivery by commo prior to packing. Thus, APPLE could use the RS-1 only for receiving. On 6 September 1952, the team received one complete RS-1 with spare parts.

10. On 3 November 1952 a message was received from APPLE team to the effect that the radio operator, RNDomino, had broken his operating hand and was transmitting with his left hand. Because of suspicion that the team had fallen under Albanian IS control, the security aspects of the operation were examined. There was an exchange of messages by the base with the team and control signals were used. The base received a favorable response to a control challenge proposed by RNCasting on 13 December 1952, which indicated that the team was not under control.

11. A new W/T operator, Throwoff/2, was dropped on 29 January 1953 to replace the disabled operator, and traffic indicated that RNDomino was in fact disabled and that the operation was proceeding on a secure basis.

Throwoff/2 was recruited by Italian IS in March 1949 for a U.S. subsidized CHARITY mission. On exfiltration into Greece subject was recruited by KUFire for Project THROWOFF in 1951, for which he performed valuable service. Subject had proven to be mature, courageous, and dedicated; he furthermore had proven to be reliable and security conscious in the accomplishments of missions. With the expiration of Project THROWOFF, subject was held for future use at an Athens safe-house, where he received W/T training. No derogatory information was uncovered during this period and subject consistently received commendatory evaluations on his progress. Subject was under case officer's control.

Throwoff/2 carried oral and written instructions to APPLE team leader. The

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oral instructions included an explanation of the delay in the supply drop and the importance of correct use of danger or control signals. The written instructions consisted of targets of information that the team should secure for the base. There was also a letter from [ ] to the team requesting that Airtight, team leader, return to Greece in the spring if possible for the purpose of debriefing.

APPLE team reported that the new W/T operator landed safely and that they were changing their zone. All control signals were negative. On 4 February 1953, APPLE team reported its location to be the Diber area, and that Communist forces had started operation in the drop area. While the team was on the move, armed civilians were encountered and a fire fight ensued. No one on the team was lost and one Communist civilian was killed. RNDomino's poor physical condition and the snows were hampering the progress of the team. Whereupon on 8 February 1953, the base carried out a diversionary drop to aid the team in eluding the security forces.

12. A three-man team, composed of RNPutlog, Gabnegate, and Gaboard, was dispatched to APPLE team by air on 1 May 1953. The mission of the three men was to act as guides in the exfiltration of APPLE team leader Airtight, W/T operator RNDomino, and possibly one other Albanian national who would be debriefed for any possible operational or P/W information. The exfiltration was to begin as soon after the drop as practicable.

RNPutlog was an original member of APPLE team, who exfiltrated into Greece with two other members on 15 June 1952 because of the difficult food conditions in APPLE's operational area. Gabnegate had been a member of THUNDERSTORM Group 444 in 1949. Gaboard had formerly been on a THUNDERSTORM team, and had also been employed by Gadvent's office on a team led by his brother Gabnormal. No derogatory information was found on the latter two members of this three-man guiding team and they were selected because of their knowledge of the exfiltration route.

Training, given by [ ] and training staff, lasted for two weeks and consisted of map reading, security, survival, first aid, weapons, compass, reception committee procedures. Special emphasis was placed on parachute training and physical conditioning with field problems and hiking. Students' comprehension varied from fair to excellent. The team members showed proper motivation and a high degree of interest in all subjects.

All available information concerning the area of operations was made known to the team. Because all team members were experienced in covert operations, it was not deemed necessary to give them the general briefing. The exfiltration group was supplied with one PS-5 and a special signal plan calling for contacts every other day. RNPutlog would notify the base prior to beginning the exfiltration to Greece. The signal plan, cipher pads, and danger signals

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were carried in by RNFutlog. The password to be used on the night of the drop was PUKA, counter-pass PERMITI. The password to be used on reaching the Greek border was APPLE. RNFutlog carried gold which was to be turned over to RNCertain who would be in charge of the work during Airtight's absence. The exfiltration mission was expected to arrive in Greece o/a 20 May 1953, provided that there were no unforeseen hindrances on the route.

On 4 May 1953, W/T contact with APPLE team indicated reception was completed. Three agents and four containers were delivered in three passes to the team. According to APPLE, the three men fell in a wooded area "because of a poor drop by the pilot". Gabnegate was slightly hurt in the fall (his legs and ribs were injured). With this exception, the body drop was considered successful.

13. On 12 May 1953, the exfiltration mission, APPLE/3, consisting of RNFutlog, Gabnegate, Gaboard, Airtight, RNDomino, and an unidentified friend separated from the remaining members of APPLE team, to be now known as APPLE/2 and consisting of RNCertain and Throwoff/2, and started the trip toward the Greek border. On the following day, 13 May 1953, APPLE/3 established W/T contact with the base. Exfiltration progress was hampered by the poor physical condition of three of the six-member team: Airtight had dysentery, Gabnegate was injured from the drop, RNDomino was weakened due to illness following the breaking of his hand in November 1952. However, they proceeded in the direction of the border. On 5 June 1953, exfiltration team APPLE/3 reported it had run into an ambush near Vithkuq. In the ensuing battle, RNFutlog was wounded. There is no evidence that the attack was planned or that the attackers had previous knowledge of the team's presence in the area. Base's offers to resupply the team by air were rejected, because the team was physically incapable of making arrangements for reception. The possibility that the team was controlled prompted base to order Airtight and one guide to exfiltrate, leaving the others behind. The team's response was that all members would continue to move toward the border together. On 18 June 1953, the team reported their position approximately 12 miles from the border. There has been no contact with APPLE/3 exfiltration team since that date.

Reports emanating from Greek sources indicate that sometime after 18 June 1953, a team which may fit the description of APPLE/3 was ambushed and all members were killed in the ensuing battle, with the exception of RNFutlog. The latter poisoned himself after expending his ammunition. No confirmation has been received to date on the above reports and the fate of the team remains an open question.

14. In the meantime, contact was being maintained with the stay-behind APPLE/2, and preparations were being made at the base to dispatch two teams to their area of operation. On 4 June 1953, a three-man ORANGE team, composed of Airometer, Gadummy, and Gablution, plus the PLUM team leader, Airchip, and

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two supply containers were dispatched to a reception committee set up by APPLE/2 and friends approximately 10 miles Northeast of Tirana. The two remaining members of PLUM team, RNDepart and Airblown were not dispatched due to RNDepart's freezing for a few seconds and the lapse of safe drop time estimated at five seconds.

The mission of the new teams was to remain with APPLE/2 until they were brought up-to-date on conditions within the country and then move to their respective areas of operations. ORANGE team was to move to the Elbasan area, and PLUM team to the Mirdite area. Upon reaching their respective areas of operations, the teams would: (1) attempt to locate and establish contacts with friends in government, military circles, and elsewhere; also, they were to locate DZ's for body and supply drops, and areas for caching supplies; (2) conduct reconnaissance and determine conditions in their areas of operations; (3) establish W/T contact with base and send out all items of information covered in the briefing. Both ORANGE and PLUM teams were to remain within the country as long as conditions permitted.

It is to be noted that the men comprising ORANGE and PLUM teams were granted operational clearances on the following dates:

Aironeter - 20 October 1952  
 Gadummy - 29 January 1953  
 Gablution - (see below under Recommendations, No. 21-m)  
 Aichip - 7 August 1953  
 RNDepart - 5 October 1951  
 Airblown - 29 August 1952

Headquarters files do not show any adverse information on the above named agents.

Some question regarding APPLE/2's status existed due to messages received from the team subsequent to the personnel and supply drop of 4 June. APPLE/2 first indicated that the drop was incomplete and was made from a very high altitude. However, the team later indicated that the four agents and containers were not received. The morning following the drop, APPLE/2 team heard rifle fire in the drop zone area, and was forced to retreat from the vicinity. To this date nothing more has been heard from APPLE/2 or any other source regarding the fate of ORANGE or PLUM.

The files at Headquarters do not reflect any information regarding knowledge ORANGE and PLUM may have had on the exfiltration of APPLE/3. It is requested that the field furnish information on what, if any, knowledge ORANGE and PLUM may have gained prior to their dispatch into Albania regarding the plan and/or personnel of exfiltration team APPLE/3.

The base has been maintaining W/T contact with APPLE/2 and it is presently being planned to exfiltrate the two-man team.

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15. There is one feature of security interest concerning the first APPLE team, in that allegations were made by an Italian source, [ ] (graded B) to the effect that one member of the team, RNDomino, had engaged in espionage activities on behalf of the Tirana regime. The field advised Headquarters on 31 January 1951 that a report had been received through [ ], which stated that RNDomino and Hysen Sallku, both of Diber and at the time stationed at HBPardon in Germany, had formerly assisted Zef Priska, described as one of the most dangerous Albanian Legation agents in Italy. The report stated, "The latter two individuals [RNDomino and Sallku] certainly continue correspondence from Germany with Priska who is thus able to follow closely the program of action of the NCPA, as well as the activities of the Albanians in Munich, activities which the latter presumes to be procuring in the greatest secrecy. Priska has sent previously and continues to send information of great value to the Albanian Legation."

Another report from a usually reliable source, [ ] dated 20 February 1951 can be summarized as follows: Report appears to originate with Italian Police sources and describes Priska as an Albanian Legation agent who probably collaborated with Italian IS for cover purposes. In addition to RNDomino, the same report mentions the following as suspected Albanian agents in Italy: Ibrahim Kydra, Ramis Kira, Hysen Sallku, Rauf Shemu, Halil Meniku, Nexhat Peshkopija, and Taco Baci.

Another report indicates intelligence activities on the part of RNDomino and Sallku on behalf of BIS. In this report dated 8 December 1949, [ ] an Italian source graded B, lists RNDomino and Sallku along with 33 other Albanians as having been recruited by Hasan Kupa for special operations being sponsored by BIS.

As a result of the 31 January 1951 report, Headquarters cabled [ ] on 6 February 1951 that there were no traces on Priska; and that it had been confirmed that both RNDomino and Sallku were at HBPardon in Germany, but were not among operational bodies and would not be used operationally for the present. It was suggested that a check be made with [ ] with a view to running a double agent operation if [ ] charge was substantiated.

There was an exchange of cables and dispatches during the following weeks regarding the allegations, which were considered both by the field and Headquarters to have serious implications. The field reported that its investigations showed no evidence to substantiate the charges. RNDomino and Sallku were placed under surveillance at HBPardon, their mail was observed, and certain investigations were performed in Rome. There was close collaboration between our representatives in Italy and Germany. On 21 May 1951 the [ ] station cabled Headquarters that RNDomino and Sallku were cleared of all suspicion, and that the details would "be pouched soonest".

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Although extensive search has been made in Division, Branch, and Registry files, the detailed report referred to has not been located. It would appear however, that it completely cleared both RNDomino and Sallku of all suspicion, as both were later used in operations in Albania. (Note: Sallku was parachuted into Albania on the night of 15 October 1951 as team leader with four companions. In an ambush a few hours after the drop, he was killed by state security forces, and his death was reported by Radio Tirana on 24 October 1951.)

16. The field states that security was maintained at all times while agents were in training. However, Headquarters does not know where the training of the various agents actually took place, with the exception of RNDomino's training in Germany. The field is further advised that more information should be furnished to Headquarters on what training personnel and other staff officers were in contact with the agents.

17. There is no information available at Headquarters regarding the security of safe-houses. For a meticulous scrutiny of the security aspects, it is necessary to have all details pertinent to the security of safe-houses.

18. There is not enough information available at Headquarters regarding the security of transportation, to and from training areas, to and from border areas.

19. The Headquarters' files do not reflect any information to indicate what security measures are taken as regards air support. No information is available regarding security measures taken at the airfield and concerning any knowledge outsiders might gain from observation or contact with crew members.

20. Information is lacking at Headquarters on the amount of information the Greek liaison received on this operation. It is difficult for Headquarters to judge the security aspects of the Greek liaison channels without the availability of pertinent details on this question.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

21. Available information at Headquarters reflect that the APPLE operation was conducted with security aspects considered throughout. It is recommended, however, that the field:

- ✓ a. Provide more data on the manner of agent recruitment.
- b. Provide more information on where agents are held before training commences.

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- c. Provide more data on Staff personnel involved in the operation, the part each played, with time and dates.
- d. Make available to Headquarters more information on the security of training sites.
- e. Provide more data on the transportation of agents to and from holding areas, training sites, and border areas.
- f. Provide more data on the security of safe-houses used.
- g. Review the security of our liaison with the Greek service, and provide Headquarters with more data on the workings of this liaison.
- h. Provide Headquarters with more data on the security of air support.
- i. Furnish Headquarters with information of compartmentation maintained between ORANGE/PLUM and APPLE.
- j. Give greater attention to the teaching and explicit clarification of danger and control signals.
- k. Place "Agent Training" in the uppermost category of the training phase.
- l. Have all W/T operators "fingerprinted".
- m. Forward the necessary PRQ outlines and results of investigations of Gablution so that operational clearance may be instituted as required by regulation. The Headquarters' files do not indicate that any action has been initiated toward granting an operational clearance to subject.
- n. Forward a copy of the detailed report sent to Headquarters clearing RIBomino and Sallku. See paragraph 15. (This report is not readily available at present in Headquarters.)

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